

# Day 1: Symposium

## Orientation and Exchange

- 10:00-10:05 Opening remarks by the organizer  
Ms. IKENAGA Toshie (Director General, Gender Equality Bureau, the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan)
- 10:05-10:20 Description of the program and symposium  
Ms. OGAWA Yoshiko (Senior Consultant, IC Net Limited)
- 10:20-11:10 Interaction of participants (one-minute presentation by each)
- 11:10-12:30 Interaction and lunch
- 12:30-13:00 Break

## Part 1: Symposium

- 13:00-13:05 Opening remarks  
Ms. IMAI Eriko (Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Cabinet Office)
- 13:05-13:15 Outline of the symposium and presentation on a research project regarding the media in Asia Pacific countries  
Ms. KANEHIRO Junko (Senior Consultant, IC Net Limited)
- 13:15-15:00 Panel discussion  
Topic: Advancement and Future of Women Journalists  
Moderator:  
Dr. HAYASHI Kaori (Professor of Media and Journalism Studies at the Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, the University of Tokyo)  
Panelists:  
Ms. KUMEI Ayako (Correspondent, News Department, News Reporting Center International News Division, NHK [Japan Broadcasting Corporation])  
Ms. JIBU Renge (Freelance journalist, Visiting fellow of the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies at the University of Tokyo)  
Mr. TAKEDA Kota (Staff writer of Science and Medical News Section, the Asahi Shimbun)  
Ms. Quek Eng Lang Audrey, Singapore (Opinion Editor (Global Affairs), ST Editorial Department, The Straits Times)

Ms. Thuy Nguyen Thu, Vietnam (Deputy Head of News and Economics/ Editor Assistant, News and Economics Department, Vietnam Women Newspaper)

15:00-15:20 Break

## **Part 2: Opinion exchange**

15:20-16:30 Opinion exchange among women journalists and members of the general public (group discussion)

16:30-16:40 Closing remarks

16:40-16:50 Completing a questionnaire

## **Part 3: International Get-together**

17:00-18:00 International get-together

\* In addition to the program participants, 54 members of the general public participated in Parts 1 through 3.

## Opening Address by Ms. IMAI Eriko, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Cabinet Office

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to you all for attending today's symposium: Hasshin! – A New Era That The Media Creates. Since 2016, the Cabinet Office has been promoting exchange between women of the Asia Pacific region and Japan who are working to build a bridge between the countries in order to facilitate sharing of their knowledge and experiences. In the past years, we invited women entrepreneurs who play active roles in their respective countries, but this year, which is the fourth year, we asked women journalists who work in the media industry to get together.

Women's empowerment in the media and inclusion of women in the decision-making process in the field of journalism is extremely important, since the media has a major influence on public awareness. This year's theme is "Hasshin!" The word has two meanings. One is to "takeoff" – meaning women moving forward in the media industry, while the other is to "send out messages" – meaning sending out messages on various issues from women's perspective.

Today, there will be an opinion exchange with the participation of media workers and those who seek to work in the media in the future. It would be wonderful if this program could provide insights on what the media can do, or even what ONLY the media can do, to achieve a society where women can play active roles. And finally, I would like to ask you to Hasshin, or share, what you learn today to the rest of the world.



## Summary of Panel Discussion

### Outline:

The panelists, both women and men journalists from Japan and abroad, shared their life events and career as well as their major articles and the reasons for covering the topic, the process of story making, their circumstances and what they find rewarding at work, prospects of their career and goals. In addition, they discussed what kind of change women's participation in the media would bring about in the industry, and then to society as a whole.

### Panelists:

Ms. KUMEI Ayako

Correspondent, News Department, News Reporting Center International News Division, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)

Ms. JIBU Renge

Freelance journalist, Visiting fellow of the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies at the University of Tokyo

Mr. TAKEDA Kota

Correspondent, Science and Medical Division, Asahi Shimbun Company

Ms. Quek Eng Lang Audrey, Singapore

Opinion Editor (Global Affairs), ST Editorial Department, The Straits Times

Ms. Thuy Nguyen Thu, Vietnam

Deputy Head of News and Economics/ Editor Assistant, News and Economics Department, Vietnam Women Newspaper

### Topic 1: Panelists' career development through life events

#### Ms. Kumei:

▶ Men and women are treated equally with regard to salary and promotion, but as your life enters different phases such as having a child, it becomes hard to maintain the same degree of commitment such as rushing to the site of an incident. That makes it somewhat hard to be promoted to a managerial post.

▶ However, more men have come to understand and accept the way working mothers work.

#### Ms. Audrey:

▶ To enable women to balance between work and life, you need three Ss: state support, social support, and social norm.

▶ At present in Singapore, both men and women are allowed to take parenting leave, but some do not take it considering its influence on their carrier or evaluation. Social support is important, but social norm is also crucial as it works as a driving force.

#### Ms. Thuy:

▶ I work at a media company specialized in women's issues and 50% of employees are women and women comprise 60% of all managers. So my case is an exception.

▶ Our company provides gender training to correspondents and editors. It's because gender

stereotypes embedded in our social norm could unknowingly affect the articles we write.

**Ms. Jibu:**

- ▶ Back in 1996, around the time I looked for work, many companies had gender-specific job positions. Women who kept working after having a child at the time were both very rare and very capable, including my female boss, so I felt I would not be able to balance work and life.
- ▶ Women are responsible for housekeeping and caregiving in most cases, making it hard for them to be promoted at work. However, that can change if men enter the realm of caregiving.

**Mr. Takeda:**

- ▶ Until getting married at 39, my life revolved only around work. When my child, who is now two, was born, I took a six-month parenting leave, and then had a job transfer away from home for a year. Currently I work but place first priority on housekeeping and parenting.
- ▶ Personnel evaluation system tends to place value on the degree of commitment to the organization, such as long working hours, not just the quality of articles. Having managed both work and child rearing, I learned how hard it is. I imagine that many women have given up their career because of such difficulty and I think it is such a huge loss of talent.

**Topic 2: Summary of each panelist's article, purpose of writing the article, circumstances that made each panelist write the article**

**Ms. Kumei: On "The Way Japan Works—'Is It So Strange? Views of Non-Japanese'"**

- ▶ It is a program in which diplomats who have seen various countries discuss the way Japanese people work.
- ▶ They commented: workplaces in Japan have more men than women; Japanese work too much because they are evaluated by the amount of working hours; and men seem to believe that women's social participation threatens their position.
- ▶ I made this program to encourage viewers to get out of their unconscious bias and start thinking how we can build a society where both men and women live a fulfilling life.

**Mr. Takeda: On "What Do You Think of Ikumen (child-rearing men)?"**

- ▶ With a colleague who has a child of about the same age as mine, we launched a project to express "uneasiness of fathers" which I myself felt while juggling work and family. Then I wrote articles on Ikumen, with experts' views attached, encouraging readers to stop and think.
- ▶ During my parenting leave, people praised me by calling me Ikumen, but I felt like I was just an accessory of my wife although I was in charge of caregiving. On the other hand, once I was back in my job I started working long hours again and wondered: "Why can't I just raise my kid in a normal way?"
- ▶ Over 70% of the readers disliked the term Ikumen. Some experts suggested that while fathers who manage both work and family are praised and called for, society gives no special consideration to such fathers at work, conveniently reflecting conventional values.

**Ms. Thuy: On an article regarding women community leaders in rural Vietnam**

- ▶ I wrote about two women leaders trying to develop a new type of rural community. I did it to raise people's awareness on the importance of women's leadership and change people's

perception of gender roles.

- ▶ It's interesting that their husbands support their wives' pursuit of careers. In Vietnam, male chauvinism is still prevalent and hampering women's leadership. But things are changing.
- ▶ I wrote this article to inspire other women to play active roles in their own community.

**Ms. Audrey: On the aftermath of an incident in which a male student secretly filmed women's shower room**

- ▶ The male student was expelled from school only for one term "not to harm his career prospects" and exempted from prosecution. It prompted a major discussion over the balance between the rights of victim women and the male student's future that cannot be measured.
- ▶ We need appropriate criminal punishment and new laws to crack down on those who abuse technologies including smartphones. To achieve an ideal gender balance, we need to raise people's awareness and deepen our thoughts involving politicians.

**Ms. Jibu: On "Prime Minister Abe, We Need a 'Single Mothers Special Zone!'"**

- ▶ In 2015, I covered a story of a lady who founded an NPO in Morioka City, Iwate Prefecture, to address the poverty of single mothers and help them find a job.
- ▶ At the time, I was an advisor to the World Assembly for Women (WAW!), hosted by the Government of Japan, so I had her give a talk at a WAW! conference. Then a State Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare heard her story and took action that led to the improvement of various systems. I believe it's critical to connect articles you write to better policies.

**Topic 3: Positive effects of an increase of female managers in the media on journalism and society**

**Ms. Kumei:**

- ▶ An increase in women with decision-making authority would change the way organizations are run and vitalize them from within.
- ▶ However, we should take it as not only women's issue, but as an issue of both genders. Men's understanding is essential and it's also important that men understand women's position.

**Mr. Takeda:**

- ▶ By including women when determining the newsworthiness of a story, life-related topics such as housekeeping, parenting, healthcare and caregiving would come to the front, not leaning too much to the news on politics, economy and international affairs.
- ▶ It's critical for journalists to stand in others' shoes using their imagination to write stories and make them news articles.

**Ms. Thuy:**

- ▶ In my company, to represent women's voice to articles, there is a rule requiring each article to have a female news source.
- ▶ We can challenge gender stereotypes because our newsroom director is a woman.
- ▶ She is a valuable role model for those who want to pursue a career in journalism.

**Ms. Audrey:**

- ▶ Our correspondent in Hong Kong was six months pregnant when she voluntarily covered the protest and did a great job.
- ▶ While women who play active roles in society increase, there are also women who want to spend their days off with their children and single women who must look after their parents. They are both gender issues. We need to address these challenges.

**Ms. Jibu:**

- ▶ When looking at numbers, the proportion of women leaders in today's Japan, in the media industry especially, is much smaller than other countries. Too few women are leaders.
- ▶ It's easier for men to talk about their interest in gender issues or caregiving when there are women around.

**Summary of Dr. Hayashi's Comments**

The articles introduced today are all written from personal perspective in the author's effort to connect those issues to society and social systems. That's exactly where professionals such as journalists, producers and directors can show their skills. The hard part is, whether you have a boss who supports your writing such an article or not.

While it's very important to increase the headcount of women, it's also important to increase the number of people who are sensitive to everyday miscellaneous matters. When you argue that we need more women, you could get a huge backlash from men. So it might be a bit easier to say that we want more feminine articles, or let's say, articles written from an everyday-life perspective. In Japan, we need to handle both strategic measures and practical discussion adeptly so that male top managers who are not used to discussing gender issues won't get grumpy.

On the other hand, caregiving work such as nursing care and child rearing is still there and in this society women still shoulder such tasks in the majority of cases. In firms and organizations, it sometimes results in spreading work burdens to female workers who are single and it could eventually even cause conflict among women. Although it may seem like a confrontation among women, in reality, it's all rooted in the male-dominant society itself and I don't want people to switch the blame to women only.

Any policy and support program is highly influenced by social norms and ethics. And after all, the media has such a significant influence over consensus formation that leads to such social norms and ethics. I sincerely hope that you, media workers, maintain the sense of everyday life and do your very best in your work.

## Group Discussion

Based on what was talked about during the panel discussion, the program participants and the general-public participants exchanged their views on “women and the media” in eight small groups.

### ○Theme

In the light of women’s participation in the media industry and its influence on society as well as changes in journalism, what should the media industry be like in the future? What kind of role women journalists should play? What do they find rewarding in their work?

### ○Methodology

**Process 1**: The program participants shared their views on the following three sub-themes while sharing their own experiences.

- ① How can women’s advancement change society and journalism?
- ② What kind of role should the media play?
- ③ What are the roles of women journalists? What can be done to make the work of women journalists rewarding?

**Process 2**: The general-public participants asked questions to the program participants. Prior to the symposium, the general-public participants selected one of the following types:

- ① Working for the media
- ② Aspiring to work for the media
- ③ Interested in the media
- ④ Interested in gender equality
- ⑤ Other

Comments by the program participants on each sub-theme, mentioned in **Process 1**, are listed below, followed by questions raised by the general-public participants, as mentioned in **Process 2**, sorted by participant type above.





## Comments by the program participants on each sub-theme mentioned in **Process 1** (Excerpts)

### ① What kind of change would women's participation bring about in journalism and society?

- ▶ By having both men and women in the newsroom, it becomes possible to secure diverse talent and cover more diverse topics on newspapers and television programs.
- ▶ Including women in the decision-making process would lead to better policy making. It is necessary to leverage information and opinions from women's perspective in the decision-making process.
- ▶ The media is able to not only present the facts but also analyze them and shape public opinions on topics it highlights. In that sense, journalists can play a role of opinion leader in promoting gender equality.
- ▶ Women are more adept at making documentaries that focus on subtle human emotions. With more women journalists, we can convey hard news stories on social systems or politics from different perspectives in a more viewer/reader-friendly manner.
- ▶ It would provide an opportunity for society to know that man's supporting woman is nothing unusual and women and men DO need to support each other.

### ② What should the media be like in the future?

- ▶ The media has three important roles: to reveal gaps; to present role models; and to report stories with gender sensitivity. The media sometimes talks too much about what women politicians wear, or even snoops around victims of crime, rather than offenders. Media workers must reflect on the way they report stories, too.
- ▶ To understand gender issues, Japanese people need to know more about other countries. For that purpose also, we need to report on gender equality.
- ▶ People in the media must be aware that the media is very influential and powerful. We need to think how to achieve our goals effectively, strategically and objectively.
- ▶ Women journalists need to be more aware of contents. In the children's books and education systems, women are often depicted as housewives.
- ▶ New topics such as sexual harassment or postnatal crisis have been recognized and raised as issues at the individual level. It's the media's job to cover such issues comprehensively and make them visible.

### ③ What do women journalists find rewarding in their work?

- ▶ Women journalists and men journalists have different approaches to cover stories. Women focus more on what the interviewee wants to say and ask questions flexibly. Perhaps women interviewees feels more comfortable talking to a woman journalist.

- ▶ If society pays more respect to women journalists and understand that they are burdened with various issues due to their gender, women journalists would feel more rewarded. Like the #MeToo movement, if women could raise issues and change society or laws, it would be also rewarding.
- ▶ The media can contribute to making changes in gender roles by covering stories with perspectives of both men and women. I want to continue delivering messages on policy making and society.
- ▶ As a result of more women working in the media industry, there are more viewer/reader-friendly, life-related news stories, such as news on child rearing or nursing care.
- ▶ Digital distribution of news enables clearer understanding of readers' responses through retweets. It visualizes responses to articles on women's issues, so it becomes easier to propose coverage of women's issues in the company.

## Questions raised by the general-public participants, as mentioned in Process 2, sorted by type of the participants (Excerpts)

### ① Questions from general-public participants who work in the media

#### **Q: What is your strategy to persuade a male boss?**

A1: If the article were in line with the company's policies and direction, it would be published.

A2: Building mutual trust is the key. Persuasion comes after that.

#### **Q: How is Japan's work style reform affecting the media?**

A1: Both women and men journalists are trying to work more efficiently.

A2: We share jobs more now. We are doing away with dependency on individual skills.

A3: I used to feel guilty for having Saturday and Sunday off in a row, but now I don't.

A4: Nowadays fewer people work until late at night at the office. It resulted in fewer dated articles so we are now working to increase collected articles and story materials, like commentaries.

### ② Questions from general-public participants who aspire to work in the media

#### **Q: How comfortable do you feel when you talk about gender issues and your own problems related to your gender with your colleagues?**

A1: After the #MeToo movement, things are changing a little. For instance, the idea that it's not appropriate to mention women's appearance is getting accepted to a greater extent.

A2: In my workplace, I am the only female correspondent. At first people said all kinds of things to me. I kept quiet first but eventually I talked to my male boss about it. It takes time, but things are getting better little by little.

**Q: What do you prioritize when you choose the work or company to work at in the media industry?**

A1: Nowadays changing jobs is just an ordinary thing to do and the system within company changes, too. I think you can choose any company where you can pursue your own goal.

A2: The first workplace offers you a great opportunity to learn about yourself. Why not take it as a platform for examining whether you really want to stay in the media industry?

**③ Questions from general-public participants who are interested in the media**

**Q: Have you ever found it difficult to work in the media because of your gender?**

A1: At reporting sites, on the contrary, I always felt that too much concern was given to women. For example, I was sent back (to the office) while others stayed when reporting on a disaster site.

**Q: When covering international politics, do men and women have different viewpoints?**

A1: Men and women have different views sometimes. I sometimes disagree with editors, but we try our best to talk to each other and come to a compromise.

A2: Sometimes, even when a woman journalist wants to make a coverage on gender issues in a large scale, men don't see them as important.

**④ Questions from general-public participants who are interested in gender equality**

**Q: Have you ever given up writing articles as you intended because of prejudice against women?**

A1: Once I contradicted loudly my male boss when he denied my idea presented in my article. Since then, I learned to collect facts that validate the correctness of my idea to persuade my boss.

**Q: The general public is easily influenced by what the media says. Who should deal with such a situation to control it and how?**

A1: It's important to present diverse views and opinions to the public, but people tend to read only opinions and articles that they agree with so readers often have bias in the first place. The media must consider not only readership or profit. It must pause to strike a balance while readers need to be more cautious.

**⑤ Questions from other public participants**

**Q: Do you find any gender inequality in your country?**

A1: Women are not dispatched to conflict areas for security reasons.

**Q: What is the role of a journalist?**

A1: It is to provide explanation on social meaning of an event, not only telling about the event itself, and answer questions raised in people's mind.

## Conclusion of the Group Discussion

The members of every group actively exchanged opinions throughout the discussion. First, the program participants presented their views, along with concrete examples, that by increasing women in the media it would be possible to cover stories from more diverse viewpoints, and it would lead to changes in the way news is told to society, the content and quality of stories, and eventually society itself. They also argued that the media has a role to present unseen issues and female role models to society, while also pointing out how influential the media is and how difficult it is to convey messages effectively. Many of the program participants commented that the rewarding part of their job is that they can cast light over unnoticed issues from women's perspective and connect it to changes in journalism and society.

The participants who work in the media or aspire to work in the media raised many questions related to challenges women journalists face and their work-life balance, while those who are interested in the media or gender equality asked about the media and gender equality, prompting exchange of varied opinions.

## Dr. Hayashi's Comments on the Symposium and Group Discussion

Topics we discussed today were all important and it's difficult to just pick some. But one thing I want to tell you is that I am extremely impressed by the fact that a symposium themed on "women and the media" was organized and so many people came together for it from all over the world.

Another impressive thing is that this program was hosted by the Cabinet Office. In my time, media companies would have never sent their correspondents to a training course or symposium organized by the Cabinet Office. Many journalists of my generation, many of who are now in managerial positions, have this ingrained thought pattern that "you should not go to such a program just because the Cabinet Office invited you. Politics and journalism must keep certain distance" and I think it still is true. But, here we are gathering for a program hosted by the Cabinet Office. It's the government who planned and implemented this program themed on "the media and women" going beyond the boundaries of companies and bureaus. Just what is the media doing all this time? I would like each one of you to think about that.

In the past, when I talked about "women and the media" at an academic conference for instance, people would say to me: "Women's issues? Dr. Hayashi, you are too biased." But now, things are changing. When the Japan Society for Studies in Journalism and Mass Communication that I belong to as a member, proposed holding a symposium themed on "women and the media" in 2014, it was approved easily. Why? Because about that time, Prime Minister Abe came up with policies to promote women's participation. Then, male researchers who are usually saying things like "we won't take Abe politics" or "watch over

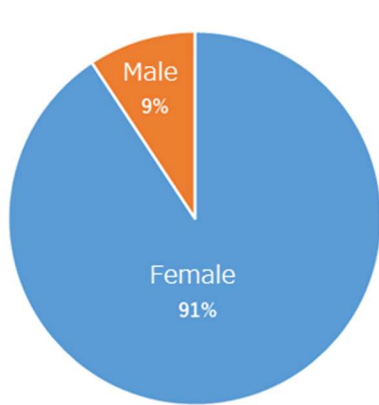
the government power” turned a little softer and started saying “there’s no choice, it’s an important topic,” and then, our proposal was approved. From this experience I became keenly aware that it is crucial to bring this topic into the mainstream. So, I would like to ask you in the media one thing. Don’t let the administration beat you in the race to bring the theme “women and the media” to the mainstream and please do your best.

In today’s discussion, themes such as promotion and working hours were talked about. Meanwhile, ongoing digitization is starting to change worthiness of news. Digitization is making changes also in our work style while companies and the needs of clients are also changing. Today we talked mainly about gender, but what’s changing is not only that. Newsworthiness, employment patterns, performance evaluation, and career progression – the way we work as a whole is changing. These issues are associated with gender but also with the entire media and society.

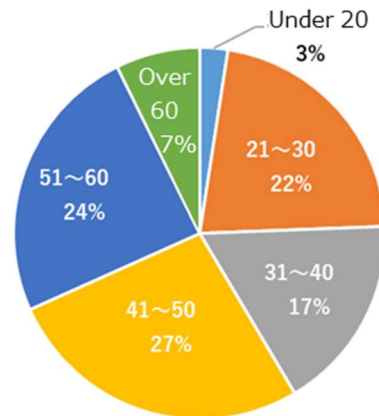
In some workplaces men who take parenting leave are still seen with a dose of skepticism. In such places, even if you raise gender issues, they may be disregarded as just women’s whining. But in reality, they are not. We talk about gender issues in order to shape the future of Japanese society and to pave the way for younger generations who aspire to work in the media so that they can make society even a bit better. After today’s symposium, we all need to go back to our respective places with confidence and continue our persistent effort to persuade stubborn bosses. This program provided us an occasion to boost such morale and inspire each other. I truly appreciated this opportunity to hold discussions with people with many different backgrounds and I myself learned a lot from them. Thank you very much.

## Results of Questionnaire on the General-Public Participants

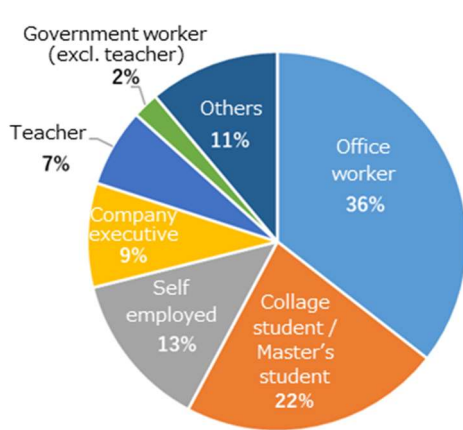
### ○ Characteristics of general-public participants



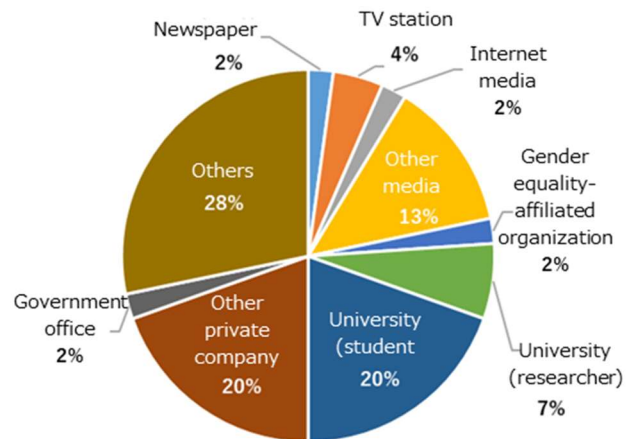
Gender



Age

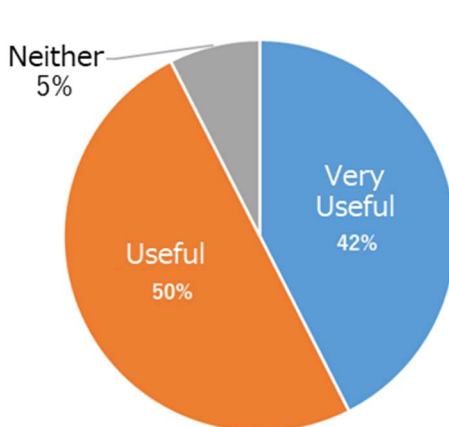


Occupation



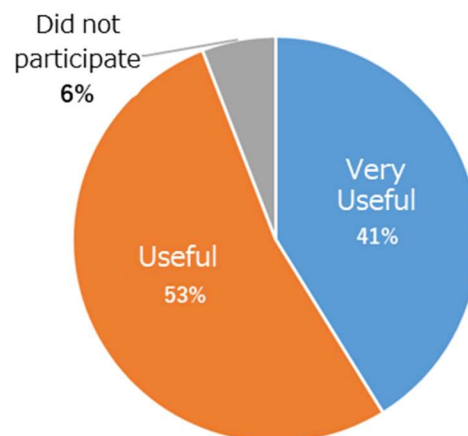
Affiliation

### ○ Comments on the symposium



Panel Discussion

“Women Journalists’ Participation and the Future”



Opinion Exchange  
(group discussion)